

Saw Mill River Audubon
June 05, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by William Kellner)
Meeting held at Senasqua Park, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

Present: Erik Andersen, Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Louisa Gagliardi, Mitchell Goldfarb, Philip Heidelberger, Michael Madias, Jr., William Kellner, Mark Magel, Kenneth Novenster, Steve Rappaport, Lynn Salmon, Jean Sparacin, Jennifer Stern, Larry Trachtenberg

Absent: Rik Kaufman, Suzanne Kavic, Valerie Lyle, Tom McEnerney, Tom Ruth, Richard Saravay, Kathleen Williamson

Meeting started at 7:05 PM.

President's Report—Erik Andersen

Erik noted that a quorum was present.

Motion: To approve the minutes of the board of directors meeting held on May 1, 2023 as circulated. Motion by: Philip Heidelberger. Seconded by: Kenneth Novenster. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Erik called attention to the proposed dates listed on tonight's printed agenda for meetings of the board of directors for the remainder of 2023 and the first half of 2024. Phil requested that the date of the 2024 Annual Dinner be changed to April 14 because some board members may be traveling to view the total eclipse of the sun on April 7. Erik asked if there were any objections to this change. There were none.

Erik called on Anne to review the ballot for the Audubon New York board of directors. Anne read the candidate names and explained that each chapter in the state needs to give an up or down vote on this slate.

Motion: To approve the slate of candidates for the Audubon New York board of directors as read by Anne Swaim. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Jean Sparacin. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Development Committee Report—Erik Andersen

[Reference Membership and Donation Report as of June 5, 2023.]

Erik noted that membership numbers have been improving. With the current 684 SMRA chapter member households and 505 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,189. Year-to-date dues payments received are \$2,019. The budgeted goal for 2023 is \$8,400 for dues payments.

Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberger

As of June 1, 2023, the endowment portfolio balance was \$1,293,630, a \$43,705 (3.5%) increase above the January 1, 2023 balance of \$1,249,925 and an \$8,656 (0.7%) decrease for the month of May. There has been \$15,000 in withdrawals from the portfolio so far during 2023. As of June 1, 2023, we are \$148,060 (93.1%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted withdrawals in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds.

Treasurer's Report—Lynn Salmon

[Reference report: Operating Revenues & Expenses Year-to-Date: 01/01/23–06/02/23]

Lynn reported that revenues from donations are doing well with over \$45,000 year-to-date. This is higher than at this time last year due to sending out fund drive letters earlier in 2023. Last year's fund drive letters went out in early June; we received \$40,000 in June–August, 2022.

Other donation amounts itemized in the report include funds specifically earmarked for the Brinton Trail Project (\$301) and our voluntary credit card surcharge fees received (\$277 total for the first five months of this year). Lynn noted that credit card processing fees we pay average \$266/month, but we only ask for credit card payers to cover this cost voluntarily.

Membership renewal numbers are a bit lower this year than last. This is likely due to the timing of our earlier annual fund drive, which, as noted above, began earlier this year. Last year we received \$4,000 in membership renewals before the fund drive letters were mailed in June.

We also had a one-time credit card bonus of over \$1,000 from opening a new account with the new treasurer.

Expenses look reasonably within budget parameters. Higher costs for office operations are mostly from postage costs.

The NY Birders Conference is still getting incoming registrations and has seven vendors signed up so far. We haven't yet started paying additional expenses after the early deposits for the hotel and speaker.

The May Ohio trip looks to have a net of \$2,600 in addition to the \$2,000 in trip donations. The bulk of the charges are on the SMRA credit card and will be paid later this month.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

Anne discussed ongoing planning for the upcoming NYSOA New York Birders Conference, which SMRA is hosting Sept. 22–24. We are currently at 80 registrations, about 30 of which are from Westchester County residents. The early reservation discount period ends on July 1. Reservations for hotel rooms are up to 30. We'll see where we are with hotel reservations at the end of June.

Our school group programs have ended as the 2022–23 academic year is almost over. We have received payment after a long delay from the Port Chester School District for a program we did for them. They are considering doing another program in the upcoming academic year.

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim

Anne reported that we had a very good trip to Ohio's Magee Marsh last month. We are grateful to co-leader Charlie Roberto and want to extend a special thank you to him for cooking dinner for the group on three nights.

Anne called on Cary to update the board about the upcoming Birding Tea. Cary said we're expecting a good turnout for the fundraising event to be held at her home in Croton on June 17 and that we're looking forward to introducing several new people to SMRA.

Advocacy Committee Report—Anne Swaim for Tom Ruth

The Advocacy Committee met on May 8. Among other things, we discussed the presentation by ClearPath New York on their plans to upgrade the state's electric transmission infrastructure with the goal of bringing renewable power from its upstate or Canadian sources to downstate population centers. Erik, Val and Jenni attended the session with ClearPath and briefed the committee. Plans to host a program on ClearPath New York are on hold for now.

Our public program held on May 10 was a webinar on the problem of artificial outdoor lighting and its impacts on birds, other wildlife, human health and neighborhood aesthetics. Dr. Lawrence Faltz, an expert on light pollution, was the presenter. We had over 60 participants. Reviews were very favorable. The program is available on the SMRA YouTube channel.

We are continuing our efforts to call attention to the problem of neonicotinoid pesticides and their impacts on birds and pollinator insects. Kara is coordinating this work. We are planning to host a public program in November on this topic. Kara noted that the New York State legislative session will be ending this week. An effort is being made to pass the Birds and Bees Protection Act before the session ends.

Bird Seed Sale—Ken Novenstern

We are looking to offer seed remaining in the shed at a significant discount. In discussion with board members and Anne, the consensus was to put the seed on sale for 1/3 (33%) off.

Pruyn Garden Update—Mark Magel

Mark reported that the gardens are doing well. He thanked Erik for his excellent work constructing a new gate for the garden fence. We've had a good turnout of volunteers on garden workdays. Annuals have been planted. At our next upcoming workday we'll get the irrigation system working and make plans for the rest of the season. We're looking at doing some kind of fun gathering—perhaps an informal tea—toward the end of the summer for our volunteers.

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.

Due to Croton Earth Day being rained out, we rescheduled the meadow planting day to May 20. We ended up planting about 50 native wild flowers. Species included: *Annis hyssop*, purple cone flower, common milkweed, butterfly weed, columbine, and New England aster.

Michael called on Phil to discuss the \$1,000 NAS grant for mitigating trail erosion due to more intense rain event being seen with climate change. Last fall, board members and Anne walked the trails and identified places where improvements (e.g., installation of water bars and trail reroutes) should be made. The remaining volunteer workdays for this trail work have been scheduled for June 13 at Graff and June 28 at Graff and Brinton Brook. We are asking for more volunteers for these June workdays; please help if you can.

Newsletter—Jenni Stern

The fall issue deadline is August 1.

New Business—Erik Andersen

Erik called on Lynn who showed the SMRA car magnets that she had manufactured and offered them to board members. These will be used as promotional giveaways for SMRA and also offered for sale.

Adjournment—Erik Andersen

Motion: Erik shall adjourn the meeting. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Ken Novenster. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Erik adjourned the meeting at 7:31 PM.